

Severian and Merryn

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 04 Jul 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4876>

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Maclean Jessica — 04 Jul 2007, 23:16

Hi all

Having also just re-read the The Claw of the Conciliator, I respectfully request some clarification on the Severian and Merryn twin-thing. I'm at work so don't have the book with me, but I just finished it last night so it's pretty fresh in my mind :-)

Near the end of the book, it clearly states that Severian was a small boy (small enough to have to jump to reach the knocker) when he went to the Witches Tower, whereas Merryn looks "old" (to a small boy) and is really about 20 years of age.

I accept that GW himself has stated that Merryn is probably Severian's sister (not sure if I have the probably bit right- please advise! :-)), I'm just wondering how that works out... is it magic that Merryn appears the same age regardless of her actual age? Cos when Sev, Dorcas and Jolenta meet the Cumean, Merryn and Hildegrin atop Apu Punchau's building, the Cumean and Merryn look exactly the same as they did when little Sev delivered that letter, so long ago...

On a maybe-not-related note, I can't help but wonder if Mr Wolfe deliberately left things vague in his own mind, in order to preserve some mystery for us readers? I always thought that the best way to keep things secret is not to know yourself, so you can't give it away...

Jessica

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Roy C. Lackey — 06 Jul 2007, 06:46 · follows Maclean Jessica

Jessica Maclean wrote:

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A number of people have commented on the apparent age discrepancy. The text gives no objective reason to account for the discrepancy, if Merryn is in fact supposed to be Severian's twin sister. Her cameo in *_Short Sun_* does little to illuminate the subject. In fact, I have always suspected that her appearance there was a gesture, polite or otherwise, to the many queries Wolfe has received on the topic. There was no real need for her to be in that scene, and that may be the best proof we will ever get that she and Sev were siblings -- if they were.

I doubt that Wolfe had *_Short Sun_* mapped out when he wrote *_New Sun_*, so it's hard to say what he originally had in mind when he created the mystery. But if Merryn is indeed Sev's long-lost sister, it makes the solution to the mystery rather anticlimactic, don't you think?

And it hangs the mandragora out to dry.

-Roy

Ian S — 14 Jul 2007, 09:34 · in reply to Maclean Jessica

Hi Jessica,

Quite an interesting question. Well, the answer to your query may be quite simple. Merryn and the Cumean probably 'walk the corridors of time,' to borrow a Wolfensian phrase. That's why Merryn seems to be the same age when Severian met her at the tomb of Apu Punchau (who is actually Severian from the future-past or the past-future) as when he met her in the Witches Tower when he was a small boy, if indeed this Merryn is one in the same person. Merryn could have gone into the future, met Severian atop the tomb of Apu Punchau, than gone back to her own relative present day where she could have met the boy Severian at the Wiches Tower the next morning. I'm not saying this is what happened for certain, but it would be the sort of thing that Wolfe might write about.

Through what means she may have carried this out (or more significantly, why) is debateable and we'll probably never find out, but I suspect it may have been done through devices similar to the one used by Rudesind to get to the House Absolute, though this device moved him through space, rather than through time. Please note the conversation between Severian and Rudesind in 'The Claw of the Conciliator' in Chapter 20, entitled 'Pictures:'

" While ago you come looking for Ultan. Didn't you find him? "

" Yes, I found him," I said. " But it wasn't a short time ago."

He seemd to grow angry at that. " I didn't mean today! But it wasn't long...."

I'm not too sure about the courtesan at the House Azure, though. For those interested, please refer to The Shadow of the Torturer, Chapter 9, for Severian's impressions that the Chatelaine Barbea and the Chatelaine Gracia might be the same person. Though ducking into a space/time device to change appearences and then zipping back to the moment you left is a bit unneccessary!

If you're a fan of 'Lost,' this may also explain why Richard Alpert does not seem to age either.

Ian

--- Maclean Jessica <Jessica.Maclean at nzpost.co.nz>
wrote:
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